

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 131633Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7586
INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USBERLIN
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E.O.11652: NA
TAGS: PINS, PGOV, GE
SUBJECT: YASSIR ARAFAT IN EAST BERLIN

REFS: (A) BERLIN 1968 (B) BERLIN 2582

1. THE VISIT OF YASSIR ARAFAT TO THE GDR
JUNE 5-7 HAS BEEN TREATED AS VIRTUALLY A STATE
EVENT BY THE EAST GERMAN LEADERSHIP AND MEDIA,
COMPLETE WITH A WELL-PUBLICIZED MEETING JUNE 7
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WITH HONECKER, SIGHTSEEING TOURS ESCORTED BY
MEMBERS OF THE SED POLITBURO, WREATH LAYINGS AT
SOVIET MILITARY MEMORIALS, ETC. THE PLO DELEGATION
WAS MET BY POLITBURO MEMBER GERHARD GRUENEBERG
(WHO HAD PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEAR EASTERN
MATTERS FOR A TIME BEFORE THESE WERE TAKEN OVER
BY THE LATE WERNER LAMBERZ). ALSO PROMINENT AMONG

THOSE WHO WERE IN FREQUENT DISCUSSION WITH ARAFAT WAS POLITBURO MEMBER HERMANN AXEN WHO HAS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREIGN POLICY AND FOR RELATIONS WITH OTHER COMMUNIST PARTIES. ACCOMPANYING ARAFAT IN THESE DISCUSSIONS WERE FAROUK KADDOUMI, ABOU MAIZER AND TALLAL NADJI OF THE PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

2. THE OSTENSIBLE OCCASION FOR THE VISIT WAS THE GDR "WEEK OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRUGGLE OF ANTI-IMPERIALISTIC FORCES IN THE NEAR EAST FOR PEACE AND SOCIAL PROGRESS" WHICH WAS A JOINT AFFAIR OF THE VARIOUS SOLIDARITY, FRIENDSHIP, PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, YOUTH, LABOR AND MASS PARTICIPATION ORGANIZATIONS OF THE GDR. THE BREADTH OF THE SPONSORSHIP OF THIS SOLIDARITY WEEK IS SOMEWHAT REMARKABLE EVEN FOR THE GDR, BRINGING INTO PLAY VIRTUALLY EVERY AVAILABLE INSTITUTION IN THE EAST GERMAN PANOPLY AND THEREBY DEMONSTRATING THE MASS CHARACTER OF THE GDR'S SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE. A HIGH POINT OF THE WEEK'S EVENTS AND OF ARAFAT'S VISIT WAS THE OPENING OF AN EXHIBITION OF PALESTINIAN FOLK ART IN THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS POSSIBLE SETTING, EAST BERLIN'S PERGAMON MUSEUM. THE SOLIDARITY WEEK WAS ALSO THE OCCASION FOR NUMEROUS REITERATIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE WHICH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE GDR ATTACHES TO THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, ITS CONDEMNATION OF ISRAELI POLICIES AND ITS NEAR TOTAL IDENTIFICATION WITH PLO POLICIES AND ACTIONS.

3. THE IDENTIFICATION STOPPED SHORT, HOWEVER, OF ACTUAL ENDORSEMENT OF PALESTINIAN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. IN THE PUBLIC EAST GERMAN EYE, THE "SOLIDARITY SUPPORT" GIVEN BY THE GDR TO THE PLO IS ENTIRELY OF AN ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTER AND IS FINANCED THROUGH VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO VARIOUS SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATIONS. THE MATTER OF POSSIBLE EAST GERMAN SUPPORT TO THE PLO IN WEAPONS AND TRAINING WAS NOT MENTIONED IN THE GDR PRESS COVERAGE OF THE ARAFAT VISIT. HOWEVER, EAST GERMAN WATCHERS OF WEST GERMAN TV WILL BE AWARE OF A REPORT FROM THE BEIRUT PAPER AN-NAHER TO THE EFFECT THAT THE GDR HAS AGREED TO SUPPLY THE PLO WITH "MODERN WEAPONS." THE TIMING OF THIS REPORT DURING THE ARAFAT VISIT MAY HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT

EMBARRASSING TO BOTH SIDES, BUT, IF SO, NO SIGN
OF DISCOMFORT WAS SHOWN THROUGH OFFICIAL GDR
CHANNELS.

4. THE JOINT DECLARATION OF THE SOLIDARITY
WEEK AND VARIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS MADE DURING
THE ARAFAT VISIT, WHILE RINGING IN THEIR
SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, AND IN THEIR
CONDEMNATIONS OF ISRAELI POLICY, DO NOT IN OUR
VIEW BREAK ANY NEW GROUND FOR THE GDR. THE
BASIC GDR STANCE REMAINS ONE OF BROAD IDENTIFICATION

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OF VIEWS WITH THE PLO IN PRINCIPLE BUT COMPLETE
SILENCE ON QUESTIONS OF TERRORIST AND PARA-
MILITARY ACTIVITY. THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT REMAINING
POINT OF DISAGREEMENT IS GDR SUPPORT FOR
INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY FOR ALL STATES

IN THE NEAR EAST, THEREBY IMPLICITLY SUPPORTING
THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL IN ITS PRE-1967 BORDERS
RATHER THAN IN A MIXED-JEWISH-ARABIC-CHRISTIAN MELANGE
TALKED ABOUT BY THE PLO. WITH THIS ONE EXCEPTION
AND ALLOWING FOR THE GDR'S UNDERSTANDABLE SILENCE
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ON THE TERRORIST QUESTION, THE SELF-IDENTIFICATION
OF THE GDR WITH THE PLO IS ALMOST COMPLETE.
THIS VISIT IS MERELY ANOTHER REAFFIRMATION OF
THAT FACT. AS AN ILLUSTRATION THAT THE PLO
RECIPROCATES THIS FEELING, ARAFAT STATED DURING
THE VISIT THAT "JUST AS YOU IN THE GDR DIRECTLY
FACE IMPERIALISM IN EUROPE, SO WE STAND
IN AN ADVANCED TRENCH AGAINST ZIONISM AND
IMPERIALISM." BOLEN

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